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RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 8600
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 1782
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 2664
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 1843
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 9654
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 2577
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 9491
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 9967
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 6582
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 3979
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 8861
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 3074
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 4993
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 6309
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000871

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Israel-Europe Relations

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that Israel's friends in the US Congress are

applying heavy pressure on the US administration and the EU not to modify their stances regarding the Palestinian national unity government. The radio reported that US Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL) and John Ensign (R-NV) asked Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice not to resume financial assistance to the Palestinians as long as they do not abide by the terms of the Quartet. Israel Radio reported that on Tuesday State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack justified meetings of USG officials with Palestinian officials, including the one that took place on Tuesday between US Consul-General in Jerusalem Jacob Wallis and PA Finance Minister Salam Fayyad, which was reported in most media. McCormack was quoted as saying: "We have settled on what we thought was an appropriate and right contact policy. I know the Israeli government has a different view in this regard." Ha'aretz also said that the US insists on maintaining contacts with Fayyad. Israel Radio reported that on Tuesday EU envoy Marc Otte met with Palestinian FM Ziad Abu Amr. Maariv reported that on Tuesday France declared that it intends to resume contacts with the Palestinian government, starting with non-Hamas representatives. Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post quoted senior GOI sources in Jerusalem as saying on Tuesday that Israel will boycott foreign envoys who meet with Hamas ministers.

Israel Radio reported that the IDF knew in advance of settlers' intention to occupy a Palestinian house in Hebron. Maariv quoted a source involved in the alleged sale of the building to Jews as saying that the Palestinian who asserts ownership of the property sold it to a Palestinian who does not live in Israel and served as a "straw man," and who is now afraid for his life. Therefore, according to the source, the Palestinian is claiming that he never sold the house to anyone. Israel Radio reported that Defense Minister Amir Peretz is supposed to review the matter today.

Yediot reported that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will arrive on Saturday night for a three-day visit of Israel and the PA. Ban will meet with the families of MIAs and abducted IDF soldiers -- from the Yom Kippur War period through the latest war in Lebanon.

Yediot reported that Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz, leader of Israel's team in the strategic dialogue with the US, who is visiting India, told Indian FM Pranab Mukherjee that Iran will soon have missiles able to deliver nuclear weapons. Hatzofe reported that on Tuesday the Knesset approved a law drafted by opposition leader MK Binyamin Netanyahu, which bans institutional bodies such as pension funds from investing in companies trading with Iran. Israel Radio reported that South Africa, Indonesia, and Qatar -- non-permanent members of the UN Security Council -- want to soften the sanctions expected to be imposed on Iran.

The Jerusalem Post published an analysis by Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies (which incorporates the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies). The report says that the Iranian-Saudi summit was a microcosm of Mideast contradictions.

Israel Radio reported that IDF troops killed a 22-year-old Fatah militant in Nablus. He had reportedly hurled explosive devices at IDF soldiers.

Ha'aretz reported that the Winograd Commission probing last summer's war in Lebanon may release the testimonies of PM Ehud Olmert and Defense Minister Peretz before the release of its interim report. Yediot reported that the testimony of former IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz will be made public on Thursday. All media reported that on Tuesday the police interrogated Finance Minister Abraham Hirschson over the alleged embezzlement of 5.6 million shekels (around USD 1.33 million) from Nili, a non-profit organization associated with the National Labor Federation in Eretz-Israel i.e. the Land of Israel] (Hebrew: Histadrut Haovdim Haleumit), to finance political activity in the Likud Party, of which Hirschson was a member before joining Kadima. Ha'aretz quoted Kadima Party insiders as saying that Hirschson's days at the Treasury are numbered.

Yediot reported that several days ago Israel's Permanent Representative to the UN Danny Gillerman met -- for the first time publicly -- with Indonesian Ambassador to the UN Rezlan Ishar Jenie.

Leading media reported that the Knesset is expected today to extend and widen the controversial Citizenship Law, which denies family

unification to Israelis and Palestinians. The law, which was to have expired next month, will be extended to July 2008 and apply to citizens of the four "enemy states" -- Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran -- as well as to those of the PA. The law provides for the establishment of a committee to consider exceptions on a humanitarian basis. However, Ha'aretz wrote that, since the Shin Bet, IDF and Population Registrar will have a majority in the committee, not many exceptions are expected to be approved. The Citizenship Law denies family unification to Palestinian men aged 18-35 and women 18-25.

The media reported that Tuesday's nationwide civil defense drill featured a response to a mock chemical terrorist strike at a school in Ramat Gan. During the drill, security forces attempted to thwart an unexpected apparent terrorist threat that turned out to be unfounded.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Michael Melchior (Labor Meimad), the Chairman of the Knesset's Education Committee, intends to demand from Olmert that he present the findings of a new report on Palestinian textbooks to PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas at their next meeting. The daily quoted Melchior at saying: "You cannot have agreements while this kind of hatred is inculcated in the children."

Yediot reported that the US Commercial Service at the US Embassy in Tel Aviv, the United States-Israel Educational Foundation, and the Israeli company Nirshamim have set up a joint Internet site --- www.nirshamim.com -- to facilitate the registration of Israeli students in US institutions of higher learning. The newspaper noted that the web site does not prominently feature the most prestigious American universities. Yediot wrote that the US is interested in tripling the number of Israeli students in America.

The Jerusalem Post reported that, after suffering heavy losses to Hizbullah anti-tank missiles during the second Lebanon war, the IDF's Armored Corps has changed its mode of operations and now intends to defeat the enemy using its two major advantages -- speed and firepower.

Leading media reported that the legislative process to enact the "Peres bill" according to which the next president of Israel would be elected in an overt Knesset ballot -- thus allowing Vice PM Shimon Peres to be chosen with a higher degree of certainty -- has been frozen: The Knesset will elect the next president in a secret vote. Maariv reported that a biography of Peres penned by Michael Bar-Zohar, which is due to be published in New York shortly, says that the late French PM Maurice Bourges-Maunoury signed a 1957 document committing France to aiding Israel's construction of a nuclear reactor. Peres was director-general of Israel's Defense Ministry at the time. The problem, according to the book, was that Bourges-Maunoury signed the pact on October 1, 1957 -- one day after the French PM's government had fallen. The book says Peres persuaded the French official to date the document September 30th, one day earlier. The book says Peres knew the new French government would not be as friendly to Israel. The book says had word gotten out the document had been backdated, "the agreement would have been annulled."

Ha'aretz reported that oligarch Arkady Gaidamak has recently stepped up efforts toward establishing a new party. The newspaper reported that Gaidamak intends to woo the votes of Israeli Arabs and that he counts on a well-respected retired senior political figure, who held ministerial posts in previous governments, to join his party.

Maariv cited the American magazine People as saying that, during his visit to Israel, Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio acceded to Shimon Peres's request to assist the peace process.

Yediot reported that the Foreign Ministry has recently received complaints from the US, Spanish, British, and Chilean embassies regarding the alleged humiliating treatment of tourists at Ben-Gurion Airport.

Maariv reported that, during the night between Monday and Thursday, a New York-bound Israil airliner ran out of fuel and had to refuel in Canada.

Maariv cited a report by Symantec, a leading Israeli anti-virus software producer, that Israelis are world leaders in spreading computer viruses.

Israel Radio reported that, at 9 A.M. today, the Histadrut Labor Federation began a nationwide strike in the public sector. The industrial action will include almost all activity at Ben-Gurion Airport.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Veteran journalist Yosef (Tommy) Lapid, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, and former justice minister, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Invading Gaza is an illusion, the remnants of the attitude of boastfulness and complacency, which apparently survived despite what happened to the IDF in Lebanon."

Block Quotes:

"Finish Off Gaza in One Blow?"

Veteran journalist Yosef (Tommy) Lapid, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council, and former justice minister, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (3/21): "Growing pressure is being applied by the political Right and by security officials for us to invade Gaza 'before it is too late'.... [Their] reasons should not be made light of, since there is truth to them. But invading Gaza is an illusion, the remnants of the attitude of boastfulness and complacency, which apparently survived despite what happened to the IDF in Lebanon.... So what should be done by someone who still thinks that there is a chance for an arrangement with the Palestinians? The government is behaving correctly for now, when it refuses to recognize the Haniyeh government, and makes an effort to prevent the erosion on the international front against recognizing Hamas. As time passes, we will see whether there is a chance that the current Hamas-Fatah coalition will choose a moderate path, which will wear down Hamas's rigidity, as happened to Fatah. In that case, there may be someone to talk to and something to talk about -- if not tomorrow, then in a year or two. At the same time, we will repeatedly warn the Palestinians -- and world public opinion -- that if the Hamas government launches a new Intifada, we will respond with unprecedented force. Not with an invasion, that would only entangle us, but with bombings, shelling, cutting off the power supply and a total blockade -- until they take the hint. It is hard to know whether this will do any good. What is certain is that invading Gaza will do harm."

2. Israel-Europe Relations:

Summary:

Oded Eran, Israel's Ambassador to the European Union, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Israel's insertion in the Union will make it necessary for Israel to adopt -- wherever is needed -- values, standards, and legislation, thus transforming it into more than just a partner."

Block Quotes:

"Birth Pangs"

Oded Eran, Israel's Ambassador to the European Union, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (3/21): "In 1994 a visionary German leader -- Helmut Kohl -- made the European Council adopt in the German city of Essen a declaration according to which Israel would be granted preferential treatment in its relations with

the European Union.... A breakthrough, i.e. a significant implementation of the 'Essen Agreement,' will be possible when one of the two (some say both) following scenarios will be realized: The first one would occur if Turkey and the EU reach the conclusion that Turkey cannot fully integrate the Union.... At that stage, neighbors such as Israel and the Ukraine could demand a minor status, similar to [Turkey's].... The second scenario would involve a diplomatic agreement resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some people in Israel believe that the EU should offer Israel and Palestine membership in order to reach an arrangement more swiftly. From my knowing the inner workings of the Union, I fear that this idea would actually delay the coming of the Messiah rather than bring it closer.... Israel's insertion in the Union will make it necessary for Israel to adopt -- wherever is needed -- values, standards, and legislation, thus transforming it into more than just a partner. This would be the realization of Kohl's wish to 'take Israel into Europe' and the achievement of the Essen Declaration."

JONES